

## George P. Delaplaine's statement /

### GEORGE P. DELAPLAINE'S STATEMENT.

#### IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE EDITOR.<sup>1</sup>

1 November 2, 1887. This statement is the result of queries chiefly regarding General Delaplaine's recollections of Solomon Juneau and Andrew J. Vieau. The language and arrangement are those of the editor, but the statement as here given has been read to the narrator and his sanction to its publication given.— Ed.

I left Cincinnati in December, 1835, then a lad, in the company of Capt. Garret Vliet, a well known surveyor, who was coming to Wisconsin on service for the government. We went to Milwaukee overland via Terre Haute and Chicago. There were only two taverns in Chicago, at the time, and everything was in a decidedly crude condition. I remember one incident, trivial in itself, but illustrative of our experience during our brief stay. The guest who had preceded me in the occupancy of my room in the hotel, had caught a muskrat in the adjoining marsh and taken it with him to his quarters, as a pet. He went off and forgot the animal, which fed upon one of my boots during the night, for want of better provender.

After spending the winter with Captain Vliet, chiefly in surveying around the Oconomowoc lakes, I returned to Milwaukee in the spring of 1836, and entered the employ of Solomon Juneau, as a clerk. Juneau's store, at this time, was on the northeast corner of East Water and Wisconsin streets. Soon after my engaging with him, perhaps in June, 1836, he sold out that plant to a Mr. Prentiss and moved to the west side, on West Water, near Spring street, the new establishment being known as Juneau's "yellow storehouse." I was then placed in charge of the store, in which I slept, although I had my meals with the Juneau family. their dwelling being a nice, large two story house.

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There were always a good many Indians around Juneau's establishment. He had a rather domineering way with them, but they appeared to hold him in high esteem and to regard his word as law. They called him "Salomo," the nearest approach they could make to Solomon. The relations between Juneau and the Indians were of a decidedly fraternal character, despite his top-lofty manner toward them, and the severe lectures which he administered to those who were habitually tipsy. Juneau was six feet tall, well-framed and fine looking, with expressive eyes—a perfect Adonis; he had curly, black hair and was a man of imposing presence. While not educated, he was a pleasant talker, and simple in his tastes and habits. His wife, a half-breed, was a very excellent woman, and their home, of which I saw a great deal, possessed quite as many comforts as those of their English and American neighbors. He had generally to entertain Indians with a free hand; and almost every night, in the trading season, there were at least half a dozen camped out on the floors of his living rooms. When parties of Indians would come in to Milwaukee to trade, it was no uncommon experience to have all the squaws quartered in the Juneau parlor, while the bucks camped just outside the settlement,—say a block or two up the river. Juneau was an unworldly, confiding man, and land speculators frequently took advantage of him, obtaining parcels of his land in Milwaukee in return for deeds in various fictitious "paper" towns throughout the new territory.

I remember Andrew J. Vieau very well, indeed. He and I were good friends in early days, but I have not seen him for twenty-five or thirty years past. I see that in his narrative<sup>1</sup> he speaks of buying out Juneau in November or December, 1836. I recollect Vieau as a fellow clerk at Juneau's, but cannot remember that he bought out his brother-in-law, but perhaps he did—it is a long time ago. I do know that I continued on, at the same store, until the spring of 1837, and that Vieau was there all of the time, and Juneau frequently. It may be, as Vieau states, that he was the proprietor,

1 *Ante*, p. 229.— Ed.

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245 during the last half of my engagement. Louis Franchere was Juneau's confidential clerk and occupied a room over the store. He was a bachelor, aged about fifty, and a finely-educated man. Upon leaving Juneau, I went to clerk for Lindsey Ward, in his general store on East Water, a few doors below Wisconsin street, and there I staid until I came to Madison, where I arrived June 2, 1838.

I have a distinct recollection of most of the old-timers of the Wisconsin metropolis in 1836–38, as given in Buck's *Pioneer History of Milwaukee*: for instance, A. O. T. Breed, Prentiss and Weeks, Daniel Wells, Jr., George and Talbot C. Dousman, Levi Blossom, Elisha Starr, Horace and Enoch Chase, Capt. James Sanderson and George H. Walker; George S. Vale, who kept a tavern, over which was suspended a huge triangle, which would be vigorously sounded at meal times; Patrick Rogan, afterwards the Watertown pioneer, and George Reed, who was Juneau's attorney. Bartlett S. Giblett, a man then some forty years of age, clerked, I think, for Breed, and afterwards returned to his home in England, where he secured a place in the London postoffice. Francis W. Heading was my chum, in those early days in Milwaukee; we had made maps together, before I went to Juneau; he was a fine man in every respect and remained in Milwaukee until 1839, when he, too, returned to his home in England; he married in England, later, and had an office in Mark Lane, London, being one of the firm of Goggs, Heading & Co., wine merchants; he died seven or eight years ago. George O. Tiffany, who was deputy postmaster under Juneau, married Elisha Starr's sister, and lives in Los Angeles, California, now; he kept a diary of local events, when I knew him;—if it could be produced, at this time, it would doubtless prove of rare interest. Samuel Beach was one of the remarkable young men of Milwaukee, then,—a tall, fine-looking fellow, whom I much liked.

I have distinct impressions, too, of La Tendre, a half-breed who had once been a voyageur but was now a runner, being occasion ally employed in that capacity by Juneau; he was bright-looking, active, but not very intelligent, although 246 Juneau trusted him implicitly, —often giving him heavy loads of specie to carry overland to Chicago. I remember that he once brought one thousand dollars' worth of specie,—the most of it silver,—all the way

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from Fort Dearborn, Chicago; it weighed sixty pounds and was not a burden that could well be distributed over the body. The Indians would not take bank bills, hence the necessity for this large mass of coin. I think that some of the money was used in paying government annuities to the Indians, it being sent to Juneau for distribution,— the rest of the specie consignment being used in Juneau's fur trade. La Tendre's method of running was to hold up both hands close to his shoulders and go at a dog-trot. In this way, he is said to have averaged forty miles per day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Andrew J. Vieau writes as follows, under date of Fort Howard, December 8, 1887, in answer to a query about this runner: "Jean Baptiste Letendre was a Canadian Frenchman, —not a half-breed. He was once my father's hired man; and, next, Solomon Juneau's. He remained in the service of Juneau until the Pottawattomies were removed, in 1837. He married a Pottawattomie squaw named Keecheeaqua (Big Woman). By her, he had a son and two daughters. His wife dying in Kansas, Letendre returned to Milwaukee and bought a piece of land near Muskego Center, Waukesha county, occupying his time in farming. The last time I saw him was in 1863 or 1864, at Muskego Center, when he was smart and healthy. I have not heard of him, even, since then."— Ed.

Jacques Jambeau, or Jacques Vieau, a brother of Andrew, was another familiar character of those days. He was a voyageur and had done some trading with the Indians, but at the period at which I knew him he did not appear to me to have any business. He was then a well-dressed, fine-looking fellow, some forty-four years of age, and was in and out of Juneau's a good deal,—being Juneau's brother-in-law.